

He Watched Lincoln Write His Name

or

THE BOY WHO SAW ABRAHAM LINCOLN

If you had been a little boy when your great grandfather was a little boy; and if you had lived in a log cabin way off in the country with only your father and mother; and if your boy friend from the nearest neighbor's house had come along and said, "Come on, let's go over to the new school house; there is to be a meeting there this afternoon," what would you have done?

Just what Cleophas Breckenridge did many years ago, when your great grandfathers were boys. He asked his father and mother if he might go. They said, "Yes," and away he went with his chum, across the fields and through the woods to the new school house. The word "new" meant a great deal to them, because until then there had been no school house and no school in this new country where Cleophas lived, and so he had never been to school.

It was a hot summer afternoon, so when the two boys came in sight of the new school house they saw the people who had come to the meeting sitting around outside on stumps and logs that had been left over after the log school house was built. Among the people was a tall young man whom Cleophas had never seen. Some one told the boys that this was the man who was to speak to the meeting, and that his name was Abraham Lincoln.

That name did not mean as much to Cleophas and his friend as it does to you boys and girls. He did not know he was looking at the man who was to be one of the great presidents of the United States, whose name would be known and honored all over the world. It was not until years afterward that Cleophas knew he had good reason to remember that day at the new log school house.

Soon Abraham Lincoln began to speak. He talked to the people about the harm and unhappiness caused by alcoholic drinks. The harm does not always stop with the drinker. It may cause him to do harm to other people. He may want his drink so much and spend so much of his money for it that his family becomes very poor and friends and neighbors have to give them food and clothes.

Then Mr. Lincoln told them why it was better not to use any alcoholic drinks. He told them of the better health, the happier homes and the better pleasures that the money saved from drink would buy.

Of course Cleophas could not remember every word of Abraham Lincoln's speech that afternoon. It was not taken down by some one and printed so that all the world could read it, like the famous speech he made at Gettysburg years afterward when he was President. But Cleophas remembered very clearly one thing which happened at the close of that school house speech which shows that the people must have thought well of what was said. Taking a folded, printed paper from his pocket, Abraham Lincoln told the people that it was a "pledge," a promise not to use alcoholic drinks. Many thousands of people, he said, had signed it. He had signed it himself, and he would be glad if the people

at this meeting who wished to do so would sign it, too. He read the pledge to the people and this is what it said:

"Whereas, the use of alcoholic liquors as a beverage is productive of pauperism, degradation, and crime, and believing that it is our duty to discourage that which produces more evil than good, we therefore pledge ourselves to abstain from the use of intoxicating liquors as a beverage."

The paper containing the pledge was placed on the top of a broad stump and many people came up and signed their names. Cleophas wanted very much to sign it.

All at once he looked up and saw Mr. Lincoln standing in front of him.

"Sonny, don't you want your name on this pledge?" Mr. Lincoln asked him.

"Yes, sir," Cleophas answered.

"You know what it means, that you will not use alcoholic drinks?"

"Yes sir, I know," Cleophas replied, "but I have never been to school and I don't know how to write my name."

"Then I will write it for you," said Mr. Lincoln. "If you stand right here and watch me do it, it will be just as good as if you did it."

So Cleophas looked on and saw his name, Cleophas Breckenridge, written below the other names, in Abraham Lincoln's own handwriting.

Then, placing his hand on the boy's head, Mr. Lincoln said:

"Now, sonny, you keep that pledge and it will be the best act of your life."

And Cleophas kept the pledge as long as he lived.

1. This story was originally announced as "The Boy Who Saw Abraham Lincoln." It has been written for reproduction by pupils

in the fourth school year, in the W. C. T. U. prize essay contest for 1926-27. It is to be told or read to the children, retold by them in their own words and then written. It may be illustrated by cut-out pictures or by original drawings.

2. This pledge should be written on the blackboard for the children to copy into their reproduction of the story, as it is too long to expect them to remember exactly. It contains some words that will probably need previous explanation. It is desirable that the meaning of the pledge should be made clear, and it may serve as the subject of a temperance lesson as to how the effects of alcohol lead to the want and spoiled lives, and injury to others which the pledge describes as "pauperism, degradation and crime."

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